

Having described the invention, the following is claimed:

1. Apparatus for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device inflatable to an inflated position for helping to protect an occupant of the vehicle, said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device including at least one vent; and

an inflation fluid source actuatable to provide inflation fluid for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device;

said at least one vent being positioned against a vehicle surface while said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is in said inflated position to help block inflation fluid from venting through said at least one vent.

2. Apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is inflatable in a direction away from said vehicle surface, said at least one vent being presented toward said vehicle surface when said inflatable vehicle

occupant protection device is in said inflated position.

3. Apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said vent is movable into engagement with said vehicle surface when a vehicle occupant engages said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device and urges said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device toward said vehicle surface.

4. Apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said at least one vent has a position spaced from said vehicle surface when said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is obstructed from deploying to said inflated position, said at least one vent when spaced from said vehicle surface releasing said inflation fluid to flow out of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device through said at least one vent.

5. Apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising a housing for storing said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device in a stored condition prior to inflation, said housing including an opening through which said inflatable vehicle occupant

protection device is inflated to said inflated position, said vehicle surface at least partially surrounding said opening.

6. Apparatus as recited in claim 5, wherein said at least one vent comprises a plurality of vents presented toward said vehicle surface at locations on said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device spaced about said opening.

7. Apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device comprises an inflatable passenger side air bag inflatable from a stored position in an instrument panel of the vehicle, said vehicle surface comprising a portion of the instrument panel.

8. Apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device comprises an inflatable driver side air bag inflatable from a stored position on a steering wheel of the vehicle, said vehicle surface comprising a portion of the steering wheel.

9. Apparatus for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:

an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device inflatable to an inflated position for helping to protect an occupant of the vehicle; and

an inflation fluid source actuatable to provide inflation fluid for inflating said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device;

said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device including means positioned against a vehicle surface while said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is in said inflated position to help block release of inflation fluid from said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device.

10. Apparatus as recited in claim 9, wherein said means has a position spaced from said vehicle surface when said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is obstructed from deploying to said inflated position, said means when spaced from said vehicle surface releasing said inflation fluid to flow out of said inflatable vehicle occupant protection device.

11. Apparatus for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:

an air bag inflatable away from a vehicle surface to an inflated position for helping to protect an occupant of the vehicle, said air bag including a throat for receiving inflation fluid and at least one vent spaced about said throat; and

an inflation fluid source actuatable to provide inflation fluid for inflating said air bag;

said at least one vent being presented facing said vehicle surface and positioned against said vehicle surface when said air bag is in said deployed position, said inflation fluid being blocked from venting through said at least one vent when said vent is moved into engagement with said vehicle surface.

12. Apparatus for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle, said apparatus comprising:

an air bag inflatable away from a vehicle surface to an inflated position for helping to protect an occupant of the vehicle, said air bag being adapted to vent inflation fluid when moved away from said inflated position.